

# **CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP**

**7/15/09**

**Environmental Defense Center Conference Room,  
906 Garden Street, Santa Barbara**

Present: Linda Krop (EDC), Shiva Polefka (EDC), Greg Helms (The Ocean Conservancy), Jean Holmes (League of Women Voters of SB), Jessie Altstatt (SB Channelkeeper), Jackie Dragon (Pacific Environment), Michael Smith (Gray Whales Count), Debra Herring, Toni Frohoff, Nick Patton (EDC), Kristi Rieman (EDC), Betsy Weber (EDC)

CINMS Staff: Michael Murray

## **I. INTRODUCTIONS**

Kristi Birney Rieman introduced herself as Shiva's replacement as EDC's new Marine Conservation Analyst. Shiva is moving to Washington D.C. to begin a graduate program at Johns Hopkins University.

## **II. OCEAN ACIDIFICATION**

(a) The Monterey Bay NMS Advisory Council voted to support our full report with recommendations. All west coast Sanctuary Advisory Councils have adopted resolutions supporting our work.

(b) Kristi will begin work contacting the other Sanctuary Advisory Councils around the country to ask whether they would be willing to adopt our report. Mike Murray mentioned that as a follow-up to the Sanctuary Summit, the National Marine Sanctuary Program is polling all Sanctuary Advisory Councils in an effort to find out whether they are pursuing any work on acidification.

(c) EDC and other partners will sponsor a showing of "A Sea Change," a new film about ocean acidification, on October 27 at the SB Museum of Natural History. We will invite a panel of experts to speak after the film. We also hope to convene a group of Sanctuary stakeholders and scientists for a workshop during the day. Finally, we hope to show the film in Ventura as well.

(d) Mike Murray reported that NOAA is working on a plan for acidification research and monitoring. The Sanctuary program will be involved, and could offer "sentinel sites" for such research.

## **III. WHALES AND SHIPPING**

(a) We discussed the SAC agenda for 7/17/09, which will include (1) a report on the summer migration season; (2) presentations regarding four case studies; and (3) a panel of experts and stakeholders. Linda, who is a member of the SAC subcommittee on whales and shipping, summarized the subcommittee's recommendations thus far as

gleaned from the case studies. After the SAC meeting, the subcommittee will continue to work on refining recommendations and developing priorities.

(b) The CWG once again expressed support for a year-round speed limit in the Channel, to ensure adequate protection, prevent harm to whales, and allow for advance voyage planning by shippers. Michael Smith pointed out that humpbacks and blues are in the Channel almost year-round.

(c) We discussed ongoing concerns related to the notices to mariners. The CWG expressed disappointment that the current notice does not recommend a speed reduction. We also asked about progress with figuring out how to use data from credible sources to ascertain “triggers” for noticing mariners. Mike Murray told us that the Sanctuary is working with NMFS, the Naturalist Corps and concessionaires on this issue.

#### **IV. MLPA/MARINE RESERVES**

Greg reported on the progress and status of the MLPA process. The Open Houses were well attended; CA Dept. of Fish and Game (CDFG) is accepting comments until July 18. At the next Blue Ribbon Task Force meeting (July 28-29), the process and guidelines for Round 3 of the stakeholder process will be discussed and adopted. The regional stakeholder group will finish its design phase in August-September. The Blue Ribbon Task Force will then develop a final recommendation by the end of the year, which will be used to initiate the state’s environmental review process.

#### **V. OFFSHORE ENERGY PROJECTS**

Given the concerns and questions that were raised about our resolution at the May SAC meeting, the CWG has decided to withdraw the resolution and instead prepare a report analyzing how offshore energy projects may impact or otherwise relate to the Sanctuary and its resources. We will then bring some recommendations back to the SAC.

#### **VI. RED ABALONE**

Jessie Altstatt from SB Channelkeeper reported on the progress of the "Abalone Advisory Group" (red abalone stakeholder group), which is sponsored by CDFG. CDFG is working on recovery and management planning, and convened the stakeholder group to help envision what a potential limited red abalone fishery at SMI would look like. So far, three options have been proposed: two options allow take, but provide different allocations for commercial vs. recreational take. The third option, devised by Jessie as the conservation representative on the group, would allow harvest for restoration purposes and research on the potential for rebuilding the population. Modeling for any take option shows further decline of the species. The next step involves developing total allowable catch for each option, as well as management recommendations. In January, the Fish & Game Commission will select a preferred option and initiate the environmental review process.

The CWG talked about the vulnerability of abalone to warming waters (whether from an El Nino event or climate change), and the need to incorporate such concerns in any management decision.